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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 002562

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2016

TAGS: PGOV KDEM PHUM NI

SUBJECT: SENATE TO LAUNCH ITS OWN INVESTIGATION

REF: ABUJA 2349

Classified By: Political Counselor Russell Hanks for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) The Senate has decided to launch its own investigation into allegations of high level corruption at the Petroleum Technology Development Fund Fund (PTDF). The move by the Senate on September 26 ups the political ante in the increasingly bitter political battle which pits the President against the Vice-President and sets the stage for potentially wide-ranging public hearings on corruption at the highest levels of the Nigerian government.

¶2. (U) The Senate Judiciary committee delivered its recommendation to the full Senate, which in turn adopted a resolution to have its investigation led by an Ad-Hoc committee. The Judiciary Committee rejected the option of reviewing the already released Administrative Panel report in favor of conducting its own. On 9/27 the Senate President named the 13-member committee to investigate the PTDF saga. The committee is geographically and politically balanced, and is chaired by Victor Ndoma-Egba.

¶3. (C) The investigation is likely to go beyond the specific allegations in the Administrative panel report and look more generally at how the PTDF operated. The Vice-President has also submitted documentation which he alleges proves the president's complicity. Thus, the focus would be broad enough to include the activities of both the President and Vice-President, who may be called to testify at public hearings. The findings of the committee's investigation will be compiled into a report which may include recommendations for actions, "up to and including impeachment," a key aid to Senator Nnamani told Poloff. The whole Senate would then vote on any resulting resolutions.

¶4. (C) Comment: This is the latest round in the showdown between the President and Vice President (reftel). Both sides are working hard at swaying public opinion about the corruption of the other, however the public hearings are likely to dirty both. While the Senate intrigue is in its early stages, the President is likely to continue to make the case that the Administrative Panel's findings disqualify the Vice President from running for president. By gazetting the panel's findings, the President hopes to bolster his legal case. The Vice-President, meanwhile, is likely to continue to press his case in the courts, and hope that the Judiciary will deliver him from his current predicament, and that his allies in the National Assembly will buy him enough time.

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